

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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OMB-01 EB-07 ACDA-05 AID-05 /085 W

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R 141102Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6744

INFO COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 0822

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJ: DISSOLUTION REACTION AND ELECTIONS ROUND-UP

REF: A) BANGKOK 0731; B) BANGKOK 0487

SUMMARY. PM KHUKRIT PRAMOT, IN STATEMENT TO PRESS JANUARY 13, STRONGLY DISCOUNTED RUMORS THAT THE APRIL 4 ELECTIONS WOULD BE POSTPONED EVEN IF VIOLENCE OCCURS. HE SAID HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT INITIATE ANY NEW POLICIES BUT WOULD ONLY CARRY OUT PREVIOUS POLICY, INCLUDING THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN COMBAT TROOPS BY MARCH 19. HE ALSO STATED THAT HE WILL SOON VISIT SOUTHERN THAILAND. ALL IS CALM THROUGHOUT THAILAND, ALTHOUGH RECRIMINATIONS AGAINST KHUKRIT STILL ARE BEING EXPRESSED BY FORMER UNITED PARTIES AND OPPOSITION MP'S. THE PRESS IS RIPE WITH STORIES OF BREAKUP OF OLD PARTIES AND CREATION OF A MYRIAD OF NEW ONES. END SUMMARY.

1. EXCERPTS FROM THE JANUARY 13 NEWS CONFERENCE OF PRIME MINISTER, AS TRANSLATED BY USIS, FORWARDED FOR DEPARTMENT'S INFORMATION:

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BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

REPORTER: HOW DO YOU FEEL AFTER PARLIAMENT HAS BEEN DISSOLVED?

KHUKRIT: I STILL HAVE TO SHOULDER THE BURDEN OF BEING HEAD OF THE CARETAKER GOVERNMENT AND I MUST ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAINTAINING PEACE AND ORDER UP TO THE HOLDING OF ELECTIONS. FURTHERMORE, IT IS MY DUTY TO SEE THAT THE GENERAL ELECTION IS HELD IN THE ZEST AND MOST SATISFACTORY MANNER...

REPORTER: HAVE YOU PAID ANY THOUGHT TO THE FACT THAT IF THE PROBLEM OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF POLITICAL PARTIES IS NOT SOLVED, AND IF PARTIES ARE NOT REDUCED TO A MORE SUITABLE NUMBER, EVEN IF A NEW GENERAL ELECTION IS HELD, THE SAME OLD AND UNDERSIRABLE SITUATION WILL BE FACED AGAIN?

KHUKRIT: I HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE PEOPLE, THAT THEY WILL MAKE CORRECT DECISIONS.

REPORTER: WHAT ADMINISTRATIVE WORK WILL THIS CARETAKER GOVERNMENT CONTINUE PERFORMING?

KHUKRIT: IT MEANS IT WILL NOT PERFORM ANY NEW WORK AT ALL, THAT IT WILL CONTINUE WORK IT HAS BEEN DOING ALREADY, CARRYING ON ADMINISTRATION AT THE SAME LEVEL UNTIL THERE IS A NEW GOVERNMENT TO TURN ADMINISTRATION OVER TO. NO CONSIDERATION WHATSOEVER MUST BE PAID TO ANY NEW PLANS. MOST OF THE WORK WILL BE ONLY ROUTINE ADMINISTRATIVE WORK. THIS MEANS THAT THE ONLY SUBJECT WHICH WILL BE CONCENTRATED ON AND CARRIED OUT WITH SPECIAL CARE AND THOROUGHNESS IS PREPARATIONS FOR THE HOLDING OF A GENERAL ELECTION WHICH MUST BE AS HONEST AND ABOVEBOARD AS POSSIBLE.

REPORTER: RUMORS ARE BEING SPREAD THAT SHOULD VIOLENT INCIDENTS OCCUR AGAIN, SOMETHING MIGHT OCCUR WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE GENERAL ELECTION NOT BEING HELD. DO YOU CONFIDENTIAL

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THINK THERE MIGHT BE ANY TRUTH IN THOSE RUMORS?

KHUKRIT: IN MY CAPACITY AS CARETAKER PRIME MINISTER, I WISH TO ASSERT THAT I WILL DO EVERYTHING I CAN FOR A GENERAL ELECTION TO BE HELD ON APRIL 4. THIS IS MY FIRM INTENTION, AND I ACCEPT SOLE RESPONSIBILITY TO PREVENT ANY OBSTACLE OBSTRUCTING THE HOLDING OF THE GENERAL ELECTION, REGARDLESS FROM WHAT SIDE THOSE OBSTACLES MAY

BE, AND REGARDLESS WHAT ACTION MAY BE TAKEN...

REPORTER: DURING THE NEXT 90 DAYS WHEN THIS GOVERNMENT WILL BE A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT, MUST IT CONTINUE IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY IT STATED TO PARLIAMENT?

KHUKRIT: ANYTHING THAT HAS NOT BEEN STARTED YET WILL NOT HAVE TO BE STARTED.

REPORTER: WHAT ABOUT THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN STARTED ALREADY?

KHUKRIT: THEY WILL HAVE TO BE CONTINUED, OF COURSE.

REPORTER: DOES THAT INCLUDE THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF COMBAT TROOPS BY MARCH 19?

KHUKRIT: OH, OF COURSE.

REPORTER: WILL YOU GO TO THE SOUTH IN ORDER TO REMEDY PROBLEMS THERE?

KHUKRIT: I THINK I MUST GO THERE. I MUST WAIT A FEW DAYS UNTIL EVERYTHING IS ORDERLY HERE FIRST. IN ADDITION, I AM STUDYING THE PROBLEM AND REPORTS MADE FROM VARIOUS SOURCES. (END EXCERPTS).

END UNCLASSIFIED

2. DEGREE OF SURPRISE BY RANK AND FILE MP'S AT DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT ILLUSTRATED BY STATEMENT MADE BY
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PRAWIT SITHANYARAT, SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (SAP) MP AND SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR, TO EMBASSY'S CHIEF POLITICAL ASSISTANT THAT BETTING WAS 20-1 IN SAP AGAINST KHUKRIT DISSOLVING PARLIAMENT.

3. THE COUNTRY REMAINS CALM IN FACE OF THE DISSOLUTION. OUR CONSULATES IN CHIANG MAI AND SONGKHLA REPORT THAT THE POPULACE IS TAKING A WAIT AND SEE ATTITUDE, WHILE THOSE WHO LOST IN THE ELECTIONS OF JANUARY 1975, ARE EAGERLY LOOKING FORWARD TO APRIL 4.

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 0822

4. RECRIMINATIONS FROM WITHIN THE UNITED PARTIES AND FROM WITHOUT CONTINUE, BUT MOST POLITICIANS ARE TURNING TO PREPARING FOR THE NEXT ELECTIONS. THE PRESS IS FULL OF RUMORS THAT MP'S ARE RESIGNING FROM ESTABLISHED PARTIES AND FORMING NEW ONES. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, POL LT. COL. BUNLOET LOETPRICHA, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY, HAS RESIGNED FROM THE PARTY, AS HAS DEPUTY PARTY LEADER CHARUN KUWANON FROM THE SOCIAL NATIONALIST PARTY.

5. MOST POLITICAL OBSERVERS AGREE THAT THE NEW FORCE PARTY (NFP) AND THE DEMOCRAT PARTY ARE THE BEST ORGANIZED TO CAMPAIGN FOR ELECTIONS AT THIS TIME. THE NFP SPOKESMAN, CHATCHAWAN CHOMPHUDAENG, TOLD REPORTERS ON JANUARY 13 THAT THE NFP IS PREPARED TO RUN CANDIDATES IN ALL THE CONSTITUENCIES. THE DEMOCRATS INDICATED THE SAME INTENTION RECENTLY.

6. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION (DOLA), WHICH WILL BE IN CHARGE OF CARRYING OUT THE ELECTIONS, SAID THAT THE INTERIOR MINISTRY WILL SPEND ABOUT 300 MILLION BAHT TO CARRY OUT THE ELECTIONS. HE ADDED THAT THERE WILL BE 279 SEATS IN THE NEW HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO BE FILLED ON APRIL 4 (VICE 269 IN
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THE 1975 ELECTIONS) BECAUSE OF AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS. ACCORDING TO THE ELECTION LAW, THERE MUST BE ONE MP FOR EACH 150,000 POPULATION. THE PROVINCES WITH INCREASED REPRESENTATION ARE BANGKOK (FROM 26 TO 28), KALASIN (FROM 4 TO 5), PRACHUAP KHIRI KHAN (FROM 3 TO 4), ROI ET (FROM 6 TO 7), SURIN (FROM 3 TO 4), TRANG (FROM 2 TO 3), NARATHIWAT (FROM 2 TO 3), UDON (FROM 8 TO 9), AND BURIRAM (FROM 6 TO 7).

7. THE CARETAKER CABINET IS THE KHUKRIT CABINET WHICH INCLUDES THE FOUR MEMBERS OF THE SOCIAL AGRARIAN PARTY (REF B). THIS CABINET WAS SWORN IN BY THE KING AT 3:00 P.M. JANUARY 12, ABOUT 7 HOURS BEFORE THE KING DISSOLVED PARLIAMENT.

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8. COMMENT: THE INITIAL SHOCK OF THE DISSOLUTION IS QUICKLY WEARING AWAY AS THE POLITICIANS TURN TOWARD PREPARING FOR THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS. THE EXPECTED RENDING OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY AND OTHER PARTIES HAS BEGUN AS NEW CONFIGURATIONS OF PARTIES BEGIN TO COALESCE. AT THIS POINT FEW THAI POLITICAL OBSERVERS SEE MUCH HOPE THAT ONE PARTY WILL WIN A MAJORITY OF THE SEATS; SOME HOPE THAT THE NUMBER WILL BE REDUCED TO A MANAGEABLE NUMBER. THERE IS CONTINUED SPECULATION THAT THERE WILL BE AS MANY PARTIES IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT AS IN THE PREVIOUS ONE.
WHITEHOUSE

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